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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly reviews the development and current problems of school libraries in Quebec with emphasis on trends since 1960. The provisions of the 1960 "Code Scolaire" for school libraries are outlined (in French). Also listed (in French) are recommendations concerned with school libraries from "Le Rapport Parent," a mid-1960's report calling for improvements in Quebec's educational system. School library funding and staffing limitations in the 1980's are described, and it is noted that library schools in Quebec give little emphasis to the training of school librarians. A final section lists (in French) 16 conclusions from the 1981 Jomphe Report, which outlined the underdeveloped state of Quebec's school libraries. (ESR)

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SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN QUEBEC

Books have had a place in the life of Quebec since the European discovery of Canada. When French explorer Jacques Cartier arrived at an Indian village of Hochelaga on October 2, 1535, natives brought him their sick to heal, and Cartier, following a French custom of the time, read from the Gospel According to St. John. Champlain established the practice of having a book of history read during the morning meal and in the evening a passage from the lives of the saints. Thus the earliest French settlements in North America contained at least a few books, in other words, a small library.[1]

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[1]David M. Hayne. "A survey - Quebec library history" Canadian Library Journal. 36 (December 1981) p. 355.

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I. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

In order to understand and analyze the situation of the school libraries in Quebec today, it would be helpful to present a brief retrospective study. Actually, the first school library appeared in Lower Canada around the year 1845. Mr. Jean-Baptiste Meilleur, the first superintendent of schools in the area, had indicated the importance of developing school libraries in a report written in 1844. A law concerning education in Lower Canada stated that these libraries be under the control of the Minister of Education and that allocations be given for the creation of libraries in the elementary schools. This law was passed in 1849.

These meager beginnings in isolated areas of the country were to have much influence on the rest of the Province of Quebec. By the 1850's, school libraries flourished in many areas. However, the most numerous ones were to be found in the Montreal area, and they were mostly in academic institutions. "The 55 school libraries represented 32.1 per cent of all the collective libraries in Montreal before 1900; 74.5 per cent of them were francophone. Their period of greatest development, the 1850's, followed growth in numbers of the francophone population in Quebec and Montreal, and indicates as well a turning point in the cultural development of Quebec.[2] It must be remarked however, that it was especially in the classical secondary schools that there was a tendency to place more importance on the school library. In the public sector of both primary and secondary schools, there was much to be desired. It was not until

the 1960's that an all out effort was made to improve the situation.

[2]Yvan Lamonde. "Social origins of the public library in Montreal" Canadian Library Journal. 36 (December 1981) p. 367.

II. EFFORTS MADE SINCE 1960

"Le Code Scolaire de la Province du Québec" put into effect in 1960 by the legislature, was a springboard for other laws and directives to be established for school libraries.

The "Code Scolaire" of 1960 presented these two main points:

> 571. Toute commission scolaire est autorisée à assumer le coût de l'établissement, du maintien et du développement de bibliothèque scolaires.
>
> 572. A même les fonds votés annuellement par la Législature pour fins d'enseignement le surintendant est autorisé, aux conditions qu'il détermine, à rembourser à toute commission scolaire les trois quarts du montant qu'elle a effectivement payé pour l'achat des livres.[3]

And thus, the school libraries were to play an important role in requiring that the school commissions take an active role in financially aiding school libraries. Yet, even at this early date, no mention is made as to who should assume the responsibilities of each individual library.

Between the years 1963-1966 there was a desire to improve the educational system in Quebec, and this included the school libraries. The document, "Le Rapport Parent" was drawn up making some important recommendations in these areas. They are here paraphrased:

[3] Législation, réglementation et politique. Bibliothèques scolaires: service des bibliothèques d'enseignement, Québec, Ministère de l'Education, août 1978, p. 5.

1. Que chaque école ait une bibliothèque et au moins un bibliothécaire qualifié ou un enseignant-bibliothécaire.
2. Que la bibliothèque soit integrée au projet éducatif de l'école.
3. Que la bibliothèque ait un budget non-transférable.
4. Que chaque commission scolaire crée un comité de planification et de coordination des services de bibliothèques scolaire et publique.[4]

The creation of large public schools permitted everyone to obtain at least a high school education. Within these institutions, libraries were supposed to be well established and flourish. However, no staff was put in them, and some of the schools never got libraries.

Fifteen years after the publication of "Le Rapport Parent", we ask ourselves just how much all this previous legislation has done for the school libraries in Quebec. There is reason to believe that in the 1970's there was still much remaining to be done. Even with the thrust to make certain advances, the evidence was there. Only a few areas had made any acknowledgeable efforts to improve their situation, while most areas had no or little evident change.

In 1983 the rules governing the school libraries in Quebec have not changed, but the budgets have decreased so much that it has become impossible to meet the financial needs of the school libraries that wish to continue providing service. A lot of our elementary and high schools

[4]Mémoire sur le livre vert. Association des bibliothécaires scolaires du Québec. Juin 1978. p. 3

do not have libraries and most of them are without any librarians. This appears to be a regression, whereas in the 1960's there was a great enthusiasm for new developments. The Quebec situation continues to lag behind in relationship to elsewhere in Canada. The current drastic economic measures implanted by the Quebec Department of Education, together with the regulations limiting library purchases to Quebec based suppliers, and the abolishing of school library discount privileges cannot help the Quebec school library standards to improve, and will even put it farther behind the standards of the other provinces.

From time to time different organizations express their concern but that's about it. In 1983, at McGill the Dean of the Faculty of Education and The Director of the Graduate School of Library Science got together and expressed their concerns to the Minister of Education, Monsieur Camille Laurin. These are actions that try to keep the interest going while the tocal population seems to be only bored with the whole process.

For a number of years our school libraries have been managed by all categories of people from clerical to professional. Teachers who have "volunteered" to work in libraries are not recognized as teachers nor as librarians. This former category of personnel is in a very bad need of definition. In the Province of Quebec there is no program where one can get training in librarianship as a teacher, nor can they earn diplomas or certificates in school librarianship. Quebec school boards hire library technicians to staff some school libraries but there is a

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definite lack of trained professional personnel to work in the libraries. The problem is very serious when we look at school libraries in the French environment. Private schools do not seem to suffer from the same acute problem of the public sector. In 1979, a survey undertaken by the Quebec Association of School Libraries showed that 22 French school commissions had not employed library staff in their school libraries. The English commissions had some paid staff and approximately one professional for every three schools, while the French schools had only one professional for every ten schools.

Again and again, organizations after organizations, committees after committees have demonstrated their alarms at this situation but in 1983 we find that the school library still remains a "fringe benefit" in the field of education in Quebec.

Large sums of money have been invested in school libraries by the Department of Education in the past 15 years. It is most disturbing to realize that expensive facilities and materials are underutilized, because libraries have no staff to instruct students and teachers on their use. On top of this most elementary schools do not even have staff to keep the library open all day which deprive students access to the library and from very valuable assistance. And since most schools do not have librarians to fight for their share of school funds, the library suffers.

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Education

Library schools in the Province give little emphasis to the training of librarians to work in schools. In part this is a result of the lack of a job market in Quebec for employment in school libraries. There is little incentive for librarians to specialize in service to children or young adults, when they are unable to find jobs in the school system.

The Jomphe Report 1981

The latest report called The Jomphe Report after the author's name produced in 1981 and entitled "Le personnel responsable des bibliothèques d'écoles francophones, primaires et secondaires au Québec: formation et performance" is unanimous to declare that our school libraries are still in a state of underdevelopment. The situation has not improved at all and again the report mentions that French schools in the Province are worse off than English schools.

The report sums up its conclusions as following:

1. 50% des répondants disent qu'il n'y a pas de responsable de bibliothèque dans leur école;
2. 47.7% des répondants ne possèdent aucun diplôme en bibliothéconomie, bibliotechnique ou documentation;
3. seulement 5.8% et 3.2% des répondants détiennent soit un baccalauréat ou une maîtrise dans cette discipline;

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4. 53.1% des répondants affirment consacrer moins de 40% de leur temps à cette tâche de "responsable de la bibliothèque";
5. les facteurs de satisfaction les plus manifestes sont en l'endroit des relations avec les professeurs, les étudiants;
6. les facteurs d'insatisfaction les plus marquants se manifestent à l'endroit de la rémunération et des conditions de travail;
7. les gens qui sont les plus insatisfaits semblent être ceux qui sont les plus qualifiés;
8. plus le diplôme détenu par le responsable en bibliothèque est élevé plus on accorde d'importance aux activités suivants: faire de l'animation pédagogique, informer les professeurs et les étudiants sur les services offerts, rédiger des bibliographies, identifier et répondre aux besoins des professeurs et des étudiants;
9. plus les responsables occupent leur fonction à plein temps, plus ils ont tendance à percevoir ces activités comme importantes;
10. les responsables de bibliothèque se perçoivent surtout comme collaborateurs des professeurs et personnels techniques;
11. selon qu'ils sont responsables de bibliothèque au niveau secondaire, ils se percevront surtout comme personnels de soutien et diffuseurs d'information;
12. selon que les responsables de bibliothèque sont des coordonnateurs des conseillers en moyens d'enseignement ou des techniciens en travaux pratiques, ils se perçoivent davantage comme agents éducatifs;

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13. les principaux problèmes majeurs en égard à leur responsabilité au niveau de la bibliothèque sont le manque de personnel, le recrutement, les coupures de poste, le manque de locaux, le manque de support et le manque de communication;
14. ces principaux problèmes soulevés comme moyens s'atténuent ou s'amplifient selon le nombre d'élèves par étude;
15. les répondants affirment que très peu d'efforts sont faits pour que les responsables en bibliothèque complètent ou entreprennent des études au niveau de leur fonction;
16. les répondants attestent que ce sont surtout les écoles secondaires qui offrent le plus grand éventail de services à la bibliothèque, alors qu'au primaire, on s'en tient au strict minimum.

Continued neglect will lead to the complete abandonment of the school library system. This regrettable state of affairs must change or the school libraries will disappear, and with them, an integral part of our education. And no one is ready to let this go by, but someone has to try to convince the Minister of Education that libraries are an important part of the school system.